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S E R M O N

Preach'd before the Honourable

HOUSE of COMMONS

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St MARGARET'S WESTMINSTER

O N

Wednesday, December 18, 1745.

Being the Day appointed by His Majesty's
Royal Proclamation for a General Fast.

By *THOMAS NEWTON*, D.D.

Rector of St. Mary-le-Bow.

L O N D O N:

Printed for J. and R. TONSON and S. DRAPER.

M DCC XLV.

Mercurii, 18^o Die Decembris, 1745.

Ordered,

THAT the Thanks of this House be given to the Reverend Dr. Newton, for the Sermon by him this Day preached before this House, at St. Margaret's Westminster; and that he be desired to print the same; and that the Lord Carpenter and Mr. Frankland do acquaint him therewith.

N. HARDINGE,

Cl. Dom' Com'

R E V. ii. 5.

Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent.

IN the lesser Asia there were formerly seven famous and flourishing churches; but they began very early to degenerate, and several corruptions were grown up among them even in the days of the Apostles. St. John is therefore commanded to write unto them, and accordingly addresses the Revelation to them all in general, and a separate epistle to each in particular, and first to the church of Ephesus, as that was the principal,

principal, and the metropolis of the lesser Asia. It is no ordinary message that he delivers, but he writes by the authority and in the name of Jesus, *Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, will visit thee speedily in judgment, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, will take away from thee the light of the gospel which thou hast hitherto enjoy'd, except thou repent.* It may reasonably be presumed, that these admonitions had for some time at least the desired effect, in reforming the manners of men, and consequently in retarding the judgments of God: but after five or six centuries, when the Christians of the East walked no longer worthy of their holy profession, and instead of growing at all better waxed daily worse and worse, it pleased God to deliver them

them into the hands of their enemies, the Saracens first and the Turks afterwards, who turned their churches into mosques, their worship into horrid superstition, and instead of the pure religion of Jesus which they had thus abused, forced Mahometism upon them by arms and violence; and in this miserable condition they have continued ever since, sad monuments of God's justice, and terrible examples to all succeeding generations!

Such was the fate of the most glorious churches in the East, and let us beware lest such also be not the fate of the best and purest churches in the West. For these admonitions of the Apostle were intended for us as well as for them, and he repeats it again and again, *He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches*; and leaves it to us to make the proper application

tion to ourselves. Now certainly we have enjoy'd the light of the gospel as well as they, in its truest splendor and purity; and like them have fallen from our former piety and virtue. Like them too we are threaten'd with the heaviest of God's judgments, the loss of our pure religion and liberty, and this speedily too, unless we take the same course that was prescribed to them, to prevent it. *Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent.* Here are then two things proposed to our consideration, first the evils with which we are threaten'd, *I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place;* and secondly the most effectual method to prevent these evils, namely to re-
member

member from whence we are fallen, and repent, and do the first works.

I. First, the evils with which we are threaten'd are no less than the loss of all that is dear and valuable to us, both as Men and Englishmen, and as Christians and Protestants. For we are now engag'd in war with two of the most powerful princes in Europe, and it is not a fair and generous war that they carry on against us, but they have fomented a most unnatural rebellion among us, in order to impose a popish and abjur'd Pretender upon the throne of these kingdoms. And if Providence for the punishment of our sins should suffer our enemies to prevail over us, one of the first things that we must expect is to be deprived of the free exercise of our holy religion, and to be compelled into the Romish communion. *Our candlestick will then indeed be removed*

moved out of his place; we shall no longer be blessed with the pure light of the gospel, but shall be condemned to the darkness of superstition; our bibles we must exchange for vain legends and traditions, our excellent liturgy for prayers in an unknown tongue; and instead of worshipping God in spirit and in truth, we must bow down to images, and worship departed saints and angels. All freedom of debate and controversy will then be taken away. Examine and prove and profess the truth you must not; that church requires implicit obedience, and allows of no toleration; and you must either conform, or submit to go to the stake, or to the galleys, or to prison, or be forced to fly your native country. But it may be thought that the milder kind of popery may be established here as in France; but popery in any shape is terrible, and
bad

bad is the best, as appears by the cruelties exercised towards the protestants of that kingdom in the last reign, and very lately in the present. Ask any of our French protestants or their children, and they will tell you the blessings of French popery as well as of French government. But is it not much more probable, that a native of Italy, a pupil and pensioner of the Pope, from principle, from gratitude, from interest devoted to the court of Rome, will endeavor to fix and establish popery among us in the fulness of its authority? It is sometimes indeed suggested in his commendation (and strange kind of commendation it is) that he is a person of no religion; but he is the fitter therefore to be made a bigot and the tool of bigots; and none so likely to persecute, plunder, and murder the professors of the true religion, as an infidel or an atheist. England

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has

has been long consider'd as a sheep gone astray, and must by all means be fetched back to the fold, and be well fleeced to make amends for so many years as she hath been lost. They therefore who have any religion, must pray against this monstrous rebellion, as they would preserve their religion in any purity; and they who have no religion, must yet wish against it, as they would not be ridden by priests, nor be liable to ecclesiastical censures. They are too apt to say, that all religions are the same; but they would soon find and feel a very sensible difference. They would not then be suffered to neglect the service of a false church, as they do now of the true; but must be obliged to go frequently to mass and to confession. They murmur that the revenues of the church are so large; and what then will they say to the immense wealth of the Romish clergy, and

and their impositions and exactions for private masses, for prayers for the dead, for pardons and indulgences, for offerings to the saints, and numberless other inventions? They cannot bear even the moderate powers and privileges of the bishops and clergy of the church of England; and how then will they submit to the tyranny and dominion of the Romish hierarchy, the church's infallibility, the Pope's supremacy, penances, ecclesiastical commissions, and perhaps an office of Inquisition? They may then complain of Priestcraft indeed, and will feel *the little finger* of popery to be heavier than *the loins* of the church of England.

1 Kings
xii. 10.

But if we were more indifferent than I hope we are about religion, yet what is to become of our *property*? which is a consideration that may affect those, whom perhaps the other would not. All the lands belonging

to churches and abbeyes will in all probability be resumed: all public securities too will be cancell'd, as being given by a government that will then be deemed a lawless usurpation: they likewise who have obtained any royal grants, or purchased any of the forfeited estates will be forc'd to restore them to the former proprietors: all which things will beget infinite disorder and confusion; and as they will be a great blow to some even of the noblest families, so they must intirely ruin thousands of others who have no other means of subsistence. And all who have distinguish'd themselves in the service of their country and by their attachment to the present royal family will be sure to pay dearly for it, and will not be permitted to buy their peace but at an extravagant price. Nay the whole nation will lie at the mercy of the conqueror, and may be considered as a nation of rebels,

bels, and be drained and exhausted accordingly. And indeed otherwise how can he be able to recompense that starving and hungry crew, the followers of his fortunes? As their merits will be great if they succeed in placing him upon the throne of these kingdoms, so their rewards must be great in proportion; nor indeed is it a little thing that will satisfy the cravings of indigence and ambition, but like Pharaoh's lean kine they will eat up all the plump and well-favor'd ones. And immense debts will likewise be owing to foreign courts for so many years subsistence, and for the wars which they will charge as enter'd into upon his account, and for the aids and assistances which they have afforded him in this present expedition, so that we must not only endure the curse of being enslav'd, but must also be obliged to pay them for enslaving us.

And

And our *trade* and *commerce* will be in as precarious and wretched a condition as our property. For as our king will be the creature of France and Spain, and owe both his crown and the continuance of it to their aid and assistance, he must make ample concessions to them in return, and either out of gratitude or out of necessity sacrifice every thing to them that they shall require. And consequently those most valuable acquisitions, which we have made in this and former wars, will be tamely given up into their hands; the sovereignty of the seas will be lost; our commerce will be limited and restrain'd, their's will be enlarg'd and indulg'd; and as fast as foreign commodities flow in, the little wealth remaining in the nation will be drawn out, till in time we shall become like *Tyre*, the renowned city which was strong in the sea, she and her inhabitants, which caused

Ezek.
xxvi. 17.

caused their terror to be on all that haunt it, but at last was made like the top of a rock, a place to spread nets upon, the habitation only of poor fishermen. Ezek. xxvi. 14.

And to the loss of our pure religion, the loss of our property, the loss of our trade, will yet be added, to complete our misery, the loss of our *excellent constitution* and *English liberty*. For the Pretender to his Majesty's crown can never succeed here but by conquest, or under the notion of divine hereditary indefeasible right. We suppose that he would choose the latter, but divine hereditary indefeasible right infers the most absolute uncontrollable dominion in the prince, and the most unconditional passive obedience in the people. For if he has an unalienable and indefeasible right to govern, his right will be still the same, whether he govern like a king or like a tyrant; and what reason have

have we to think that he will not govern like a tyrant, and the worst of tyrants? We might as well set a wolf to guard the fold, as an Italian papist to protect the liberties of English protestants. The princes, from whom he pretends to derive his claim, were no such friends to liberty, as to make us fond of seeing their race upon the throne again; they were bred up with high notions of their divine right, and during their reigns there was a continual struggle between the prerogatives of the crown and the privileges of the people: And can this man have learned juster notions of government in Italy? or is religion to be fetched from Rome, or liberty from France or Spain? It must be by war and violence, and with much effusion of blood, that he must ascend the throne, for God forbid that we should ever submit tamely to his government; and as he must attain to power by force,

force, so by force he must support himself in it, and consequently strengthen himself with foreign aids, maintain large standing armies, and establish a military government. This would infallibly be the case; and our chains would sit heavier, and we should be more deeply afflicted with our slavery, for the full and perfect enjoyment that we have had of liberty. For it is certain that England never enjoyed so many years together of ease and liberty as since the happy Revolution. I do not except even the glorious days of queen Elizabeth, of which perhaps it may truly be said, that it is better to read of them than to have lived in them. We have enjoy'd our liberties to such a degree, that we have abused them even to licentiousness. And the worst enemy of the present government cannot charge his Majesty with attempting to in-

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fringe

fringe them in any single instance. The law hath been the constant and invariable rule of his Majesty's government, and if it had been as much the measure of his people's obedience, we should still have continued the happiest nation upon earth. No government indeed can ever be administer'd entirely to every body's satisfaction. Some persons are never to be satisfied; and there will always be defects and failings in the best of governments, as well as in the best of men: but as he is the best man who hath the fewest vices, so that is the happiest government, which is attended with the fewest evils and inconveniences. But what good have we to hope, or rather what evil have we not to fear in a change of government? A man must be destitute of common understanding, who is capable of believing that a protestant church can flourish

flourish in the reign of a bigotted papist, or if you will of a profess'd infidel; or that civil liberty can be secure under the government of one trained up in the maxims and politics of the most arbitrary courts in Europe. All the benefits and advantages obtained by the Revolution will be forfeited and lost by another revolution. And then, when true religion and liberty are extinct in Britain, where shall we find them or seek them upon earth? and who would not therefore perish rather in their defence, than survive their fall? who would not rather die a protestant and a free-man, than live an idolater and a slave?

II. These are the evils with which we are threaten'd, and we are to consider in the next place the most effectual method to prevent them. We have as high an opinion as any man can entertain, of his Majesty's heroic

heroic spirit and resolution, of the wisdom and integrity of his councils, and particularly of the great council before whom I stand, of the courage and conduct of his generals, and of the strength and bravery of his troops inspir'd with the activity and ardor of their young and darling* royal leader: but yet human means alone will not be sufficient, we must likewise implore the divine blessing upon them, and pursue the method recommended by the apostle, namely, to *remember from whence we are fallen, and repent and do the first works.*

When any calamity befalls a nation, we should look farther than the immediate causes, and consider it as proceeding originally from the hand of God. *Shall there be evil in*
a city, and the Lord hath not done
it? And it is the gracious intent and purpose of Almighty God, not willingly

willingly to grieve and afflict the children of men, but by his judgments to awaken them to a sense of their guilt and of their duty, and so bring them to repentance before the measure of their iniquities be full.

And when national calamities produce national repentance, and a people turn away from the evil of their doings, the Lord will turn away from his fierce anger, and will abundantly pardon, and instead of destroying resettle them in peace and tranquillity. There are frequent declarations to this purpose in scripture, and we see them most remarkably exemplified in the case of the Ninevites.

The prophet Jonah was sent unto them with this message from God, *Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown*, and it had the proper effect upon them. *So the people of Nineveh believed God, and proclaimed a fast, and put on sack-cloth;*

Jon. iii.
4. &c.

cloth; from the greatest of them even to the least of them. And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way, and God repented of the evil that he had said that he would do unto them, and he did it not. Oh! let us then remember from whence we are fallen, how much we are degenerated from our former piety and virtue, and repent and do the first works, and thereby retrieve the antient honor and dignity of the nation. The wisdom of the government and legislature may certainly contribute most to a national reformation by inforcing old laws, by inacting new ones, and settling things upon a right and solid foundation; and they no doubt will act in a manner worthy of themselves and of their high station at this dangerous conjuncture: but still every body may contribute something, every body may reform some, may reform one

*Sherlock on y.
Rebellion.*

at least, and not add to the sinfulness of his sins by bringing distress and ruin upon his country. This is not a time to *speake smooth things*; it behoves us to deal freely with ourselves, and to consider seriously and impartially what are those national vices, which may have been the principal occasions of the present national calamities, and of which the reformation therefore ought to be more speedy, as it is more necessary.

Isa. xxx.

10.

And one of the most melancholy symptoms in our case is the *great decay of public virtue and love of our country*. Self-love is now the prevailing passion, and every thing almost is turned to private emolument and advantage. Public spirit is become ridiculous; it hath been so often pretended, where it was not, that it would scarcely be credited, where it really was: and love of our country

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*Shelton m. y.
Rebellion.*

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country at best is only a popular topic of discourse; it is like music upon the tongue, but seldom sinketh into the heart. If we had any true love and affection for our country, should we be so fond of every thing foreign, and encourage French manufactures and French commodities to the prejudice of our own, and thereby contribute to the furnishing of our worst enemies with the sinews of war against ourselves? or would so many act in open defiance of all law and justice, and defraud the public revenue for the sake of their own private gain, carry on an illicit trade, and not only convey our treasure, but (what is even worse) intelligence to our enemies? or would so many of our fellow-subjects have taken part in this unnatural rebellion, and have joined in league with our most cruel and inveterate enemies to transfer the seat
of

of war into our own island? It was not this spirit that inspired our ancestors in the fields of Cressy and Agincourt, and enabled our two glorious queens to humble the pride of Spain and France in two of their greatest kings. It was not this spirit that animated the old Romans, and raised their country to the height of glory and of empire. And to the commendation of our enemies the French be it spoken, that they are actuated by a different spirit; they love and honor their king and country; prefer every thing of their own, and despise every thing foreign in comparison: and as we are fond of imitating their manners and fashions, it would be well if we would imitate them in the most laudable part of their character. This would be gaining a complete victory indeed over our enemies, and would be a more fatal blow to them, and

a greater check to their conquests than the most fortunate campaign. Love of our country is our duty, not only as Englishmen but as Christians. Our Saviour himself *wept*

Luk. xix.
41.

over his country at a distant view of the calamities which were to befall it. And St. Paul expresses such ardent affection for his countrymen,

Rom. ix.
3.

that he could even *wish that himself were accursed from Christ, for his brethren, his kinsmen according to the flesh.* O pray then for the peace of our Jerusalem; *they shall prosper*

Psal. cxxii.
6, &c.

that love thee. Peace be within thy walls, and prosperity within thy palaces. For my brethren and companions sakes I will now say Peace be within thee; Yea for the sake of true religion, because of the house of the Lord our God, I will seek thy good.

Another thing that requires immediate repentance and reformation

is the *luxury* and *dissoluteness* of the age. The old English plainness and integrity are in a manner lost among us; the prodigality and love of pleasure, which reigned in high life, have now descended into low life, and infected all ranks and degrees of men; and hence so much idleness and drunkenness in our streets, and such universal corruption of manners, and violation of all order and government. And what can be the necessary consequences of these things, but ruin and devastation? The Assyrian and Persian empires; the Carthaginian and Grecian commonwealths; and Rome herself, the nurse of heroes, and empress of the world; all fell by the luxury of their own subjects more than by the arms of foreign nations; they could not have been so easily conquer'd and led captive by their enemies, if they had not been first subdued and in-

flav'd by their vices. And will not the same causes naturally produce the same effects? Such vices are ruinous at all times, but are more particularly destructive in times of war, when especially the advice of Moses to the Israelites ought to be religiously observed by every nation, *When the host goeth forth against thine enemies, then keep thee from every wicked thing.*

Deut.
xxiii. 9.

It is high time too to repent of our *factions* and *divisions*, and unite all as one man against the common enemy. Our situation as an island is such, and our country withal so well-peopled, that if we were firmly united among ourselves, we should have little to fear from any power, or indeed all the powers in Europe: but of late we have been rent and torn into so many parties and factions, as no doubt have given great encouragement to our enemies, and
made

made them imagine that we were more divided than in truth we are, or than the event hath prov'd. For England never testified greater loyalty and unanimity, and we hope that neither will her sister Scotland be wanting in gratitude, and obedience, and zeal to chastise her impious rebel sons. Our common danger ought to unite us, if nothing else can: and without doubt several who might otherwise be desperate enough to be in the interest of the Pretender, yet as Britons cannot be for the Pretender brought in by France, who can never intend to give us a king, but to reduce us to a province, and constitute a viceroy over us; and others who before were wavering in their inclinations, I make no question this rebellion hath fixed in loyalty, when they see by what horrid means and instruments a change must be accomplish'd, and that

that instead of being govern'd as
 Est. iv. 11. they have been by *a golden scepter*,
 Psal. ii. 9. they must be *ruled with a rod of*
 Rev. ii. 27. *iron, and broken in pieces like a pot-
 ter's vessel.* The members of the
 church of England and protestant
 dissenters now plainly perceive, that
 they have one common interest, as
 they have one common danger; and
 we trust will unite as brethren not
 only upon the present, but upon all
 future occasions for the publick good,
 and watch and guard against popery,
 which would equally destroy them
 both. All will unite and cooperate
 with us, but the worst of papists,
 and foreign papists, who are like so
 many vipers in our bosom, and give
 secret intelligence to our enemies,
 and upon any favorable opportunity
 would throw off the mask, and de-
 clare against us. Our country hath
 been called the country of factions
 and parties; but now faction be
 dead,

dead, and party revive no more; and
 (as the voice of authority once said)
 “ let there be no other distinction
 “ heard of amongst us for the fu-
 “ ture, but of those who are for the
 “ protestant religion and the present
 “ establishment, and of those who
 “ mean a popish prince and a French
 “ government.”

Above all we should lament and
 bewail our many heinous *offences to-*
wards God, which have brought
 down these heavy judgments upon
 us, and will bring still heavier, ex-
 cept we repent. Seriousness and zeal
 in religion used formerly to be one of
 the distinguishing characters of the
 English nation, but now we are as
 remarkable for an affected levity and
 indifference. How has perjury of
 late years multiplied and increased
 among us! what dreadful oaths and
 curses are daily heard in our streets!
 what heresies and blasphemies have
 been

been vented from the press! what a spirit of infidelity hath prevailed and been propagated in the nation! what open ridicule of the most solemn offices in the liturgy, and of the word of God itself! what profanation of the sabbath! what disregard of the sacraments! what utter neglect of private and family prayer, and indeed of all publick worship and religion! Hath any nation, even of the corrupt and idolatrous church of

Jer. ii. 11.

Rome, used *their Gods* so, *who yet are no gods?* We are, too many of us, like them in our manner of celebrating the latter part of the Lord's day, but we do not like them religiously observe the former part, that is we have all their vices, but none of their devotion. And was there ever an instance of a nation despising God and religion, who were not despised in their turn, and trampled under foot of their enemies?

And

And would it not be a just judgment of God, since we have made ourselves so very unworthy of the protestant religion, to deprive us of it, *that we should believe a lie, who* ^{2 Theff. ii. 11, 12.} *believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness?* Oh! let us then humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God, repent truly of our sins, and return unto the Lord in righteousness, and he will return unto us in mercy, and save us from all our enemies. When the power of Spain was in its meridian glory, and our enemies ready to devour us were hovering about our coasts with a fleet that was called *invincible*, how did we then cry unto the Lord, and make our humble supplications unto our God, and he heard our prayer, and blew with his wind, and dispersed or destroyed them all! And when we were again in danger of sinking under the
E weight

weight of popery and arbitrary power, what zeal did we then testify for our holy religion! how were our churches crowded! how were prayers and sermons attended! how religiously did we observe our solemn fasts! how frequently and devoutly did we receive the blessed sacrament! and the Lord raised up for us a glorious deliverer, and after him a succession of protestant princes, who have been the felicity of our times, and may their posterity be so to latest generations! And *hath* God now *forgotten to be gracious?* or rather have not we forgotten to make our prayers unto him? We have certainly more to fear from our own impiety and irreligion, than from the arms of all our enemies. Let us make our peace with God, and he will be our shield and our salvation. Very applicable to the present occasion are the words of the prophet Joel,

Pfal.
lxxvii. 9.

Joel, and with them I will conclude. *Blow the trumpet in Zion,* Joel ii.
15, &c.
sanctify a fast, call a solemn assembly; Let the priests, the ministers of the Lord, say, Spare thy people, O Lord, and give not thine heritage to reproach, that the heathen should rule over them. Then will the Lord be jealous for his land and pity his people; Yea, the Lord will answer and say unto his people, Behold, I will no more make you a reproach among the heathen; but I will remove far off from you the northern army, and will drive him into a land barren and desolate; and ye shall eat in plenty and be satisfied, and praise the name of the Lord your God, who hath dealt wondrously with you.

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